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May. 19, 2014

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Burning the candle at both ends, an Oregon couple is now experiencing the sweet smell of success. Husband-and-wife team Billy Taylor and Brook Harvey-Taylor, the founders of Portland, Ore. based company – Pacifica, have been named today this year's National Small Business Persons of the Year at the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), National Small Business Week awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

With Billy's entrepreneurial spirit and Brook's creative vision, the two founders started making candles in 1997. By 2008 they had reached \$12 million in revenue. But, a change in distribution channels brought about a downturn that forced the couple to seek financing to reposition the brand and keep ownership of the firm. By

working closely with the SBA they were able to secure the money they needed

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First runner-up is a family team from San Bernardino, Calif., Anita's Mexican Food Corp.: Ricardo Robles, President; Pablo "Rene" Robles, Vice President/Operations; and Jackie Robles, Secretary/General Manager.

Anita's Mexican Food Corp. is a minority-owned, wholesale food manufacturer and co-packer. The company's origins date back to 1958 as a flour tortilla manufacturer when family patriarch Mauro Robles founded a series of businesses now known as Anita's. Mauro came from Mexico, earned citizenship and sought to create new products that respected Old World tastes and traditions. Today, all five of his children are owners of the company while our first runners-up – Ricardo, Rene and Jackie run the day-to-day operations.

Anita's operates major flour and corn based food manufacturing offering branded, private label, and contracted products and services. The company now ships across the globe. More than 1.5 million tortillas emerge from the plant in East Los Angeles. Combined with the plant in San Bernardino the plants produce and package chips by the ton.

The SBA is proud to have played a role in Anita's Mexican Food Corp's success. In 2012, to support a dramatic expansion in operations, SBA facilitated the purchase of real estate and equipment through an SBA 504 loan. Company revenue has grown over 100% the last three years and the SBA 504 loan has helped the company create jobs, with the employee count growing from 230-359 people.

Second runner-up

Second runner-up is Jeni Merrill, founder of Merrill, Inc. a Cheyenne, Wyo. woman-owned Class 'A' general contracting company specializing in site excavation, underground utilities, concrete, trenching, road construction, footer-founder excavation, building remodel/renovation, septic installation, erosion control, demolition, drainage and miscellaneous grading.

Early on Merrill kept her day job for many years to pay the bills, and worked her

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people. She has secured many contracting opportunities for national parks like the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone which has massively grown her business. She has grown revenue from \$1.8 million in 2007 to \$13.8 million in 2013. Merrill attributes her success to the many talented people who are part of the Merrill, Inc. team. She knows first-hand that the SBA's programs create real opportunities for small businesses. The success she has enjoyed allows her to create jobs and provide subcontracting opportunities along with giving back to the community.

Small Business

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